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31 July 1953

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

SUBJECT: Possible Major Shifts in French Policy

1. Recent events make it desirable to re-emphasize our conclusion in NIE-63 that France may be led to pursue policies divergent from those of its NATO allies.\* We believe that within the next several months growing internal and external pressures may bring one or more major shifts in French policy particularly re Indochina, with grave implications for US security interests in Europe and/or the Far East.

2. France has been greatly over-extended in its attempts simultaneously to maintain its European position, carry on a major war in Indochina, and cope with recurrent economic difficulties at home. At the same time, France's constitutional weaknesses and multi-party system have prevented successive cabinets from dealing effectively with these problems.

3. While postwar French governments have shown a surprising ability to limp along under such difficulties, there has been growing popular and parliamentary dissatisfaction with this situation, as indicated during the long search for a successor to the Mayer government. Not only did several candidates offer radical platforms for coping with France's difficulties, such as demands for more power for the executive, but these platforms received unusually strong parliamentary backing. The near investiture of Mendes-France was particularly important because he has advocated domestic and foreign policies, including withdrawal from Indochina and reduction of France's NATO commitments, which vary sharply from those now pursued.

\* In paragraph 9 of NIE-63, "France's Probable Future Role in the Western Security System" (23 January 1953), we estimated that: "the over-extension of French commitments, fear of Germany, dissatisfaction with the scale of US support, and fear of general war may lead the French to pursue policies diverging from those of their NATO allies, including the US. This divergence might become so marked that it would require re-examination of the bases of US security policies."

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NE-1